



Representative Lynn Schindler



2002 Legislative Update

4th District State Representative

Olympia office:

438 John L. O'Brien Bldg
P.O.Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600
(360) 786-7984

E-mail:

schindle_ly@leg.wa.gov

Committees

Education
State Government
Transportation

Leadership

Assistant Republican Floor
Leader

Toll-Free Hotline:

1-800-562-6000

TDD Hotline for the Hearing Impaired:

1-800-635-9993

Dear friends,

In a year normally set aside for mid-stream adjustments in policy and spending, lawmakers will be grappling with enormous challenges during the 2002 legislative session. We will be looking for ways to stimulate our economy and put families back to work. We hope to address the critical needs of our state's transportation system. And we must bring our \$22.8 billion state operating budget back into balance.

The results of two special legislative elections in November have given Democrats control of both the House and Senate, along with the governor's office. That means one party will be largely responsible for controlling the movement of bills and chairing key committees. But it will be up to all lawmakers to work toward responsible, long-term solutions to the budget, transportation and other issues affecting the families in our state.

This newsletter outlines some of the key issues we'll be addressing that we have a responsibility to resolve. If you have questions or thoughts, I hope you'll make it a point to contact me. Remember, the more I hear from you, the better I can represent you in the Legislature.

In your service,

Lynn Schindler
Your State Representative

Spotlight on the Budget:

Protecting Washington's Families

We must control state government spending to make up a \$1.2 billion shortfall in the current budget. In June, the Legislature approved a 2001-03 budget that spent \$650 million more than projected revenue. Combined with a declining economy, this budget could only produce two solutions in 2001-03: raise taxes or cut programs. I voted against that budget, as it was unsustainable and irresponsible.

Then came September 11. In addition to the tragic human loss, the economic fallout further complicated this state's budget shortfall, leaving Washington close to \$1.2 billion in the red. Now it's January and Gov. Gary Locke is proposing raising taxes and cutting programs, neither of which will help families, individuals or job providers in the Spokane region.

The governor's budget proposal hurts schools, the elderly and poor the most while softening penalties for criminals.

Some details include:

- Reducing funding for K-12 education by \$29 million, including a \$14 million cut in block grants – discretionary money used by schools for what local officials deem to be the greatest need,
- Cuts in human services of \$235 million, including eliminating state assistance for disabled citizens,
- \$35 million cut from nursing homes, as well as
- \$34 million reduction in funding to pharmacists who provide prescription drugs to low-income families and citizens on Medicaid.

He cuts all these vital programs that protect our state's most vulnerable while guaranteeing a pay raise for state employees and shortening jail time for drug and property crimes.

To raise revenue, the governor suggests expanding gambling opportunities in our state. By increasing gambling opportunities in Washington, we are only creating more victims.

Your elected representatives must find ways to cut bureaucracy, safeguard the citizens that truly need help, work for a stronger economy, produce and protect jobs. These will be my priorities in 2002.

Transportation:

Moving People & Products

All we need to do is take a look around to see the problems we have with transportation. The state has spent millions of dollars on roads and transit. What about the average drivers who just want to get to work, pick up their children and maybe stop by the store and pick up a gallon of milk? Buses and car pools, while beneficial for some, just don't work for many of Washington's citizens.

The governor wants to maintain this cycle. He still wants more of your money without requiring a change to the way this state does the business of moving citizens and goods.

There is no debating that Washington needs continued funding for congestion relief. However, the governor’s latest proposal is, essentially, nearly identical to the plan which failed to pass last year. This plan does not protect taxpayers or commuters.

The governor is also still insisting the vote be taken by the Legislature, not by the people of the state. Hundreds of calls, letters and e-mails were sent to my office last year, reminding me the public wants the final say in any new taxes.

And, Gov. Locke’s stated position is now that any member of the Legislature who refuses to vote for his plan will not have the roads in their district fixed. I don’t believe in threatening the people of Washington. I still believe in freedom of thought and speech.

The governor’s statewide transportation proposal includes:

- An incremental 9-cent gas tax hike
- 1.5 percent sales tax on new and used vehicles
- 20 percent gross weight surcharge on trucks
- A gross weight fee on motor homes



Tyler Tupper, 16, of Spokane, served as a page for Rep. Lynn Schindler in 2001.

Young people between the ages of 14 and 17 from across the state have come to Olympia to serve as legislative pages. They work at the Capitol, live with host families, and spend two hours each day of their week-long experience in a classroom setting learning about the legislative process.

Unfortunately, we are limited in the number of pages each lawmaker is allowed to sponsor each year. If you know an eligible student who is interested, please contact my office!

IMPORTANT: Election-Year Restrictions & Contacting Me

I will attempt to keep you informed about the issues mentioned in this mailer and others that come before the Legislature in 2002. Unfortunately, due to state law, my ability to communicate with you – the people I represent – is severely limited during an election year. I am allowed to send you just two newsletters between now and November. This brief report is my first of two mailings for the year (you’ll receive the second, a summary of the 2002 legislative session, in a few months).

However, the law does allow me to communicate and correspond with constituents who contact me with questions or requests for information regarding specific issues. This, of course, is part of my job as your state representative, and a responsibility to you that I take very seriously.

If you have questions, comments, concerns or advice to ask or offer regarding any issue before the Legislature or involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone, e-mail or in a letter. Hearing your concerns and views makes it much easier for me to represent you in Olympia. Furthermore, if you’re having trouble dealing with state government agencies, my staff and I are ready to assist you.

It’s an honor and a pleasure to serve and represent you, and I hope to hear from you in the coming months!

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Olympia, WA 98504-0600

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